

PRESS RELEASE

CENTRE FOR TRANSPARENCY ADVOCACY CALLS ON PRESIDENT BUHARI TO WALK THE TALK ON INEC AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA.

President Buhari on Tuesday, January 7 called on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Nigerian Police to “be fair to Nigerians during elections” and urging the electoral umpire to “ensure that the game is played by the rules, without fear or favour”. He continued by saying that those declared by INEC as winners “must be the candidates that the people have chosen”.

We note that the President agreed that “Democracy is about free will, and the will of the people must be allowed to prevail”. As important as this statement is, the question remains, are the people’s will allowed to prevail during elections? The President went further to say that he was “determined to give Nigeria an electoral system that meets with best practices anywhere in the world, and charged the electoral umpire to stick to the rules of fair play and adherence to justice.

Centre for Transparency Advocacy is not swayed by these rhetoric by Mr President but deeply concerned by the fact that these may be mere flowery language to assuage the Nigerian people who have been disappointed by the level of desperation of politicians and the security agencies in scuttling laid down rules and guidelines by INEC towards achieving fair, peaceful and credible elections in Nigeria. The violence and rascality displayed by politicians and actively supported by security agencies in the November 16 Governorship and Kogi West Senatorial elections in Kogi state of which President Buhari applauded the outcome still reverberates across the nation.

Centre for Transparency Advocacy, having appraised the charge by President Muhammadu Buhari to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Nigerian Police to ensure free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria therefore, issues the following statements; as a way forward

1. President Muhammadu Buhari should as a matter of urgency re introduce the Electoral Act amendment bill as an Executive Bill to the National Assembly for urgent passage into law to effect positive changes that would improve the electoral process. President Buhari as a statesman should sign the Act into law as soon as passed by the National Assembly timeously. This is key to electoral reforms and achieving credible elections in Nigeria.
2. It has become imperative for President Buhari to have a second look at the Justice Uwais electoral reform Committee report and implement it without further ado as this is desirable by majority of Nigerians and will improve the electoral process immensely.

3. The just concluded governorship and Kogi West Senatorial elections in Kogi state left in its trail sad stories of impunity, violence and security breaches leading to deaths and injuries. Centre for Transparency Advocacy was miffed at the inability and or failure of security agencies to intervene or try to stop hoodlums from perpetrating violence especially in the snatching of ballot boxes and disruption of collation process at polling units, as most of the security personnel ran for their lives leaving voters, INEC officials and observers at the mercy of the rampaging mobs. Security agencies should be neutral, as well as improve in the area of intelligence and security threat assessment to identify areas that need more attention and special deployments. The Inspector General of Police should identify and punish unscrupulous police personnel and in fact, other security agencies involved in election infractions should be prosecuted.
4. The Judiciary as the last hope of the common man must live up to its expectation and above board in the sense that the Judiciary should not be seen as aiding electoral rascality and fraud. The level of desperation by the political class should not be rewarded by the Judiciary even when diligent electoral officers were forced under duress to make returns that did not represent the will of the people as witnessed in Imo West and North Senatorial Districts in the 2019 National Assembly election. This kind of behaviour should not be acceptable and the outcome of such elections should not be allowed to stand by the Judiciary and beneficiaries of such election malpractice must be punished.
5. INEC must be allowed to be truly independent. Operational budget of INEC must be treated as priority by both the Executive and the National Assembly so that INEC will prepare for elections and discharge its mandate with less constraint.
6. Finally, we at CTA call on President Buhari to match his charge with action and show truly, that he will walk his talk by implementing his directive during the upcoming off season elections and especially, the governorship election in Edo state this year.

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